CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES

REFUGE

Vol. 10, No. 2 December 1990

Refugees and Literacy

Literacy refers, in its most narrow sense, to an ability to read and write. But literacy also entails, in a broader and much more rewarding sense, being able to effectively put these acquired skills to use in daily life. Only when we become functionally literate do we start reaping in earnest the practical rewards of learning.

These rewards can be quite substantial. Literacy can help us satisfy our basic needs or boost our self-esteem. It could even facilitate individual and communal quests for integration and, most importantly, for empowerment.

The achievement of functional literacy, a challenge to native speakers, becomes a monumental task for those who, like most refugees, generally do not master any of the common languages of the countries where they resettle.

Not surprisingly, the lack of mastery over a common language is widely perceived to be the most frustrating limitation faced by those trying to adapt to a new environment. This added limitation only compounds the social and cultural traumas experienced by refugees.

Ideally speaking, literacy programs available to unwilling migrants such as refugees should cater to their specific needs. These needs differ substantially from those of other immigrants who willingly move to another country.

In Canada seldom do basic schooling, adult education or mother tongue literacy programs take into consideration refugee requirements. More often than not refugees are limited to taking advantage of standard English as a Second Language (ESL) or français langue seconde programs available to all immigrants.

The articles contained in the present issue are illustrations of Canada's current refugee literacy debate. The authors are all practitioners in the field of education who work with refugees in different parts of the country. From different perspectives they discuss the literacy challenges refugees have to face, describe the available facilities, assess some of the advances being made, identify prevailing problems and suggest ways ot overcome them in order to improve the literacy programs now available in Canada to refugees.

Marlinda Freire approaches the issue of ESL and literacy programs from a psycho-emotional perspective. She emphasizes the importance of early attendance: "Learning may not take place

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initially (or may be minimal). This early experience may be of tremendous value in helping refugees to regain some of 'the self,' with learning taking place later on." ESL courses and literacy programs are nevertheless only part of the solution. Marlinda Freire underlines the enormous difficulties in dealing with the complex problems affecting refugees in general and refugee children in particular, and points out the need for more elaborate efforts stemming from a more all-encompassing approach.

Marie-Françoise Fayolle discusses language learning as a form of integration in francophone Québec. Not unlike Marlinda Freire her focus is mainly on the effect of literacy programs, but in a French-speaking context. Perhaps the most serious problem refugee claimants must face in Québec is the limited access to language classes and rewarding communal activities available to other immigrants. This also contributes to hamper even further francophone integration efforts already undermined by such threats as the predominant use of English in neighbourhoods and at the workplace. Yet, as Fayolle seems to indicate, there are enough grounds to believe that the widespread implementation of clear outreach policies can ensure an effective functional and just integration of even the first generation of new immigrants in Québec.

Marcela Durán's focus on the education of refugee children reveals changing patterns of criteria for school placement and policies related to minority groups since World War II. She credits multicultural policies for bringing about a sense of acceptance of ethnicity and differences in the schools over the past 30 years. This change led also to the creation of Heritage Language programs and the implementation of Race Relations policies. There has certainly been a great improvement in awareness and acceptance of problem-solving policies in the school system over the past decades, but concern still remains for the uneven delivery of services and facilities available at schools. Durán pinpoints in more detail problem areas regarding the education of refugee children. Areas such as reception, assessment and classroom-teacher training ought to be improved. Faster changes in immigrant and refugee education at teacher-training institutions should also be implemented.

Ann Goldblatt uses her Edmonton data to compare the way health and refugee workers have put their mandates into practice. She touches upon the "adjustment experience" of refugees and considers the broader notion of literacy as education for social justice. Like the other contributors, she finds inspiration in the precepts of Paulo Freire (particularly in his notion of "liberation literacy") as she examines and questions the mandates of second language educators, agency-based refugee workers and health workers dealing with refugees, and defines some strategies for change based on the orientation of those who have come through the refugee experience.

One of the difficultires refugee experts must confront in Canada is the limited number of opportunities to implement valuable participatory research policies related to refugees and literacy. We were able to take advantage of the input of some of these experts at a recent seminar organized by the Centre for Refugee Studies on literacy, distance education and refugees. As the edited minutes of the seminar attest, the open exchange of information helped define the initial parameters of a possible distance education, literacy and literacy training program for Mozambican refugees in Southern Africa, to be sponsored by The Commonwealth of Learning under the coordination of Flora MacDonald.

International Literacy Year may be coming to an end, but the lasting legacy and resourcefulness of improving literacy projects in Canada and around the world continues to prevail.

Alex Zisman, Guest Editor

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Refuge is dedicated to the encouragement of assistance to refugees by providing a forum for sharing information and opinion on Canadian and international issues pertaining to refugees. It is published four times a year by the Centre for Refugee Studies. It is a non-profit, independent periodical supported by private donations and by subscriptions. It is a forum for discussion, and the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of its funders or staff.

Subscription rates for one year are $20.00 in Canada and US $25.00 overseas. Please enclose payment with your order.

Logo design:
Dreadnaught Co-operative Inc., Toronto

Second Class Mail Registration No. 5512 ISSN 0229-5113

Acknowledgements

The publication of this special issue on refugees and literacy has been made possible by the ongoing financial support of Employment and Immigration Canada and special funding provided by the National Literacy Secretariat, Department of Secretary of State, through the auspicies of Richard Nolan, its Director General.

The opinions expressed in the articles and in the edited minutes of the seminar are, respectively, those of the authors and participants and are not necessarily those of the funders.

Refugees: ESL and Literacy
Trying to Reinvent the Self in a New Language

by Marlinda Freire

Migration is as old as humanity. It is essentially a socio-economic-political phenomenon. This assertion is even more valid when the situation involves forced migrants or refugees for whom the element of violence is always present. Violence ranges from mild to extreme, leading to exile and resettlement. The individual may have been the target or repression and torture, or the victim of more generalized forms of persecution and geographic displacement affecting larger groups (as in the case of civil war). The violence to which refugees have been subjected and which has been executed as a physical, psychological and economic level, affects every aspect of what has been most meaningful in people's lives. They have been forced to abandon their motherland with all the socio-economic-emotional and psychological implications.

Migration, even under the most ideal conditions (not the case in forced migration) has always been recognized essentially as "pathological" and "pathogenic." Migration will increase and reactivate difficulties that the individual had prior to migration. It will also create new ones. "Whenever people were sent to another country, a terrible perturbation always followed." (Hippocrates). This is not difficult to understand. At the most individual level, the core issue is one of identity.

In dealing with refugees, some issues of primary concern are related to health (mental and physical), work and education (ESL literacy, renewal of professional and academic qualifications, etc.). I will try to explore some of these issues from a psycho-emotional perspective, mainly those related to ESL and literacy. I have drawn most of these insights from three main sources: my ongoing interaction with the refugee population, both in and out of clinical and academic setting; interaction with educators; and, most of all, from the introspection and reflection of personal experiences, having arrived in Canada, some 17 years ago, as a non-English speaking refugee physician with three school-aged children. Many of these insights are applicable to the regular immigrant population but, by definition, the refugee population is more at risk for mental health and academic dysfunction, at least during the initial resettlement period. The limited research available on refugees in this area mostly deals with mental health issues.

Migration always involves cross-cultural elements even if the person comes from just across the border. Most refugees come from Third World countries. The degree of cultural translocation (or mismatch) tends to be rather severe or extreme. Most often the real political refugee is someone who has an above average interest and investment in the socio-political life of his/her country, has a solid educational background and high verbal skills. These people find the inability to communicate in the new language the most punitive aspect of their first encounter with the new society. The refugee suddenly finds him/herself in a preverbal-illiterate position which is usually perceived as the most striking feature of an overall "regressive" stage.

Many refugees have a degree or literacy that has allowed them basic satisfactory functioning in their own language, but in facing more sophisticated written tasks, they may be classified as functionally illiterate (less than grade 8 education) in their native language. Other refugees are coming from societies where there are no written forms of their languages (or dialects). Others have a written language but have not been exposed to the Roman alphabet. There are other possibilities, not only in dealing with oral and written forms of language, but in the way different societies experience language. Every group of refugees and each individual refugee within these groups will face different difficulties in encountering a second language and in attempting to become literate in the language of the receiving society. Acquisition of any language is a multifactorial process. Acquisition of a second language in the refugee population is even extremely more complex. Literacy in an second language is different from literacy in the mother tongue, even under normal circumstances. For refugees, it is not the same experience as the planned learning of a second language for academic, business or travelling endeavours.

When discussing ESL and literacy, we are talking about language and people. Language is the most important aspect of culture. Language has been said to be the mirror and map of society. It reflects the values and needs of individuals. It guides them into and through all the other behaviour patterns of society. At a more individual level, language is what allows us to be social human entities.

Personality structure can be defined by three intrapsychic elements: the way we relate to a) ourselves; b) others; and c) our environment. Language is what allows us to process and integrate these three elements. Through language we come to exist: we think, we feel, we

perceive ourselves, others and the world and all of these processes are translated through language.

Language comes naturally to most people. The mechanics involved in speaking the native language start with the babbling of the baby. Children with developmental lags in language acquisition present with both emotional difficulties and personality deficits. In societies with written language forms, sound-symbol competency (reading/writing) also comes rather naturally to most (if no learning disabilities are present) and skills start to develop in early childhood.

All societies have a population with limited verbal skills who are unable to read and write, which is almost always another manifestation of socio-economic and political oppression of the people. To quote the title of Paulo Freire's classic work: *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World* (inner and outer), literacy goes beyond being a prerequisite for promotions and academic advancement but seems to be a requisite for the "wholeness" of the individual. It is not unusual for illiterates to be very shy, timid, with tendencies to isolate themselves and with very poor self-esteem. Some develop severe phobias. It is not unusual for adults who become literate to say how their "personality" has changed. They describe themselves as becoming more friendly, more secure and with a more positive view of themselves.

What is it about language that seems to give meaning to life itself? The most important aspect of language is its emotional memory. The mechanics of language are not the most difficult to acquire. It takes about one-and-a-half to two years to acquire enough functional L_2 (second language) to cope with basic daily oral tasks. English for academic proficiency in oral and written forms seems to take about five to seven years to consolidate in an adult with solid L_1 (first language). The emotional memory of language requires time and life experiences in that language. Its acquisition is not a process that can be avoided or sped up. It just has to follow its own developmental pace. In acquiring a second language, life has to start

being experienced in the second language to be able to "emotionally" internalize this language, a process that will take anywhere form years to a lifetime.

For years I was surprised that people understood my verbalizations in English. I was able to put words and complex sentences in place, but the emotional connections had not yard been made. I only experienced the visual imagery, the flavour and the smell of it when I ate a *manzana*, but not when I ate an apple. As a psychiatric resident, the statement "I am going to kill myself" would mobilize in me a number of practical responses leading to the proper management of the suicidal patient. It took one patient to say to me "me voy a matar" to trigger the emotional response (sweating, increased sense of alertness to impending danger and a total emphatic response). I am over that stage. By now I have a sense of "completeness" in both languages.

The emotional memory of a language may be one additional factor that may initially complicate the acquisition of the second language in the refugee. Refugees have been deprived abruptly and often quite violently of what was most meaningful in their lives starting with their motherland. The refugee as a mechanism of emotional survival needs to retain whatever can possibly be retained to keep some sense of continuity of the self (identity). In order to learn a second language, the refugee has to give up more of himself, this time his/her language, even if this is only temporary. Along with the native language, the memories, feelings, emotions and life experiences, identity itself may be gone. A few years after arriving in Canada, one night I woke up in a panic state. I had dreamt I was addressing a Spanish-speaking audience, but I was delivering my speech in English. Suddenly, I overheard one person in the front row whispering to the next person, "Dr. Freire doesn't want to speak in Spanish any longer." I woke up and a tremendous sense of vulnerability and inner disintegration stayed with me for several days.

If one considers the massive losses, acute separations, possible traumatic encounters with repressive forces, the exhausting process of resettlement (that may have involved more than one country, more than one language) with all the grief accompanying the above experiences ending with the acute encounter with the receiving society, refugees, more frequently than not, are in an acute state of psychological disorganization and negative self-evaluation. Confrontation with the "regressive position" of not being able to communicate in the new language is just a reaffirmation of the regressive state of dependency and increased vulnerability. At this point, refugees are not in the best psycho-emotional state to start learning a second language. All the cognitive and emotional energy is directed towards holding on to some degree of emotional functioning and coping with demands of daily living, activities taken for granted by the native speakers (e.g. going to the supermarket, using the public transit system). Using the phone becomes a terrifying experience as there are no non-verbal clues to go by. There is a constant sense of checking and rechecking of who they were, they knew, what they had and who they are, they know, and what they have. They are always left with a deficit during the initial resettlement period. For some refugees this becomes an unresolved situation for life.

The refugee longing for the lost land and the lost self, idealizes everything lost and left behind, again as a survival mechanism. The refugee tries to duplicate in his/her new environment all those elements that could remind him/her of the old life. The refugee initially tends to associate with those who look like him/her, who have similar values, way of life and language. The refugee tends naturally to reject everything that is new that could threaten even further his/her very shaky sense of identity. Refugees have the maturity and motivation to learn the second language, but emotional aspects of the refugee experience, including some survival defences (at conscious or subconscious levels), may initially impede the learning of the second language.

Refugees who are illiterate in their own mother tongue lack the conceptual basis for literacy acquisition. In my opinion it is an impossible task for them to become literate in the second language without first mastering literacy in their own language. At best, I think that it is possible to achieve low levels of proficiency in the second language, oral and written, allowing one to accomplish very basic tasks. These people will remain basically illiterate in both languages, without ever understanding the language and the cultural fabric in which the second language evolves.

Language is the most important aspect of culture. Language has been said to be the mirror and map of society. It reflects the values and needs of individuals. It guides them into and through all the other behaviour patterns of society.

For refugees, early attendance to ESL and literacy programs may offer the opportunity to be in an environment that they perceive as holding, soothing and nurturing. There they can identify with others in similar situations. Learning may no take place initially (or may be minimal). But this early experience may be of tremendous value in helping refugees to regain some of "the self," with learning taking place later on. This may explain the fact that ESL and literacy programs that advocate the "open circle" type of programs have, apparently, better attendance.

Refugees display a number of emotional difficulties that are heightened in the initial resettlement period. We could look at some of their emotional difficulties as attempts at communication on their part. Refugees' somatizations may be the "language of the body" trying to communicate painful experiences, looking for a place of expression in a hurting body and soul. Depressive states could not communicate more clearly the hopelessness and helplessness of the reality of many of the refugee's life experiences. The increase in family violence may be the language of the poorly contained anger for so many abusive and humiliating situations that have plagued (and may still be present in) the life of the refugee. The less frequent psychotic breakdown may be the language of the refugee who cannot negotiate with the reality in his situation any longer.

Children seem to adjust and adapt more readily than adults. They also learn the language faster. Quite often children become the voice of their parents, which may be an additional burden in an already emotionally overwhelmed child. In attempting the restructuring of the family situation with its traditional roles, a child that speaks the second language better than his/her parents may be a threat to the dynamics of a familial power system. Some of the parents' concerns regarding language are: that children are not going to acquire their native language (if very young when arriving in the new country or born in the new country), that young children will forget their native language if competency in the first language is not well established when the second language is introduced), that the children will not learn to read and write in their native language (developing oral language but not becoming literate in

the first language), that the youth will choose the second language over the first (once some degree of competency in the second language is achieved), that children are not going to learn either language well (becoming alingual children instead of truly bilingual) and that the introduction of a third language (French) may be too confusing and will hinder the learning of English.

Without intending an alarmist view of the situation, all of the concerns expressed above may become concrete realities. What is important to stress is that, in my opinion, all the possibilities are avoidable. The school system is not well equipped to deal with the complexities of issues involved in teaching refugee children. They are seen as part of the large groups of students that require ESL support. Many if not all of the difficulties that the student experiences academically will be generally attributed to the ESL factor. These youngsters are very much at risk for repeating grades, presenting with academic delays and being streamed into special education or basic academic programs. If these children display "acting behaviours" that disturb the well-being of the classroom situation, they may be referred to social workers, psychologists or psychiatrists for evaluation. If these children are compliant, apathetic, withdrawn, passive and probably depressed, most likely they will not be referred for evaluation of their emotional difficulties, even though they may not be learning. Children with the highest risk are those of refugee parents that are highly traumatized, of low educational backgrounds and illiterate. These factors may present themselves in any combination.

Once refugee parents with solid educational backgrounds and literate in their mother tongue have achieved some degree of emotional and overall well-functioning (including some linguistic development in the second language), they start paying much needed attention to their children. They realize that they have a crucial role in helping their children to start learning, to maintain and to further develop their native tongue. Most parents have some insight into the crucial value for their children, in terms of emotional and psychological well-being, of keeping or acquiring the maternal language. They realize that it not only helps to establish and consolidate a bicultural identity, but it will also foster the emotional closeness of the family. Later on, it will make less severe the bicultural–bilingual generational gap. These parents also come to realize that solid linguistic development of the mother tongue (L_1), is not a threat to the acquisition of the second language (L_2). On the contrary, a solid L_1 will foster the growth and development of L_2 (English), L_3 (French) or any other additional languages these youngsters may be exposed to as children or adults.

The emotional memory of a language may be one additional factor that may initially complicate the acquisition of the second language in the refugee. Refugees have been deprived abruptly and often quite violently of what was most meaningful in their lives starting with their motherland.

I want to finish with a case that illustrates many of the factors of the refugee experience that I have attempted to describe here. María came to Canada at the age of five. Her Argentinian parents had lived as illegal immigrants in Germany, where sh was born. In Germany María was left under the care of a baby-sitter, who taught her German, a language in which she simply could not communicate with her parents. Her father is illiterate but he speaks Spanish and Italian. He works in a factory. Her mother has a high school education, speaks Spanish and, after learning English, is doing clerical work. Spanish is the language spoken at home. María started school in Toronto and now is in grade 11. She is an attractive, vivacious, quiet 17 year-old who consulted me following the death of a close relative regarding the grief she was experiencing. María's spoken English and Spanish are both immature and of very limited development. She makes basic errors orally in both languages. She occasionally uses "Spanglish," but her limited English is her preferred language of communication. She avoids reading and writing tasks. She is illiterate in Spanish and her reading and writing skills in English are very basic. She plans to go to college and become a teacher.

María's OSR indicates that she repeated grade 2 and that in grade 8 she was working at a grade 2-3 level. She was placed in a basic program, where, according to the school personnel, she is doing very well. All María's difficulties were always attributed to the ESL component. School personnel have never felt that a more comprehensive evaluation off her difficulties was or is warranted. A psychoeducational assessment done, on a private basis, at my request, indicates that María is of average intelligence, and is working at a level ranging from grade 4 to the beginning of grade 6 in all tasks involving reading and writing. This assessment also indicates that the significant discrepancies between ability and achievement stem from a primary "language processing" learning disability with secondary "attentional deficits." María's difficulties were never identified, therefore never addressed.

Marlinda Freire *has been working as Chief Psychiatrist, Student Support Services, at the Toronto Board of Education.*

Intégration à la société québécoise par l'apprentissage de la langue

par Marie-Françoise Fayolle

Salvador, Iran, Nicaragua, Bulgarie, Vietnam, Chili, Guatemala, Laos... nous pourrions continuer cette liste de pays où règnent des conflits ouverts ou latents, où la guerre, la souffrance, la faim et souvent la violation des droits de l'Homme obligent les individus de ces pays à fuir leur propre terre pour gagner un pays d'accueil où ils pourront espérer trouver la paix, la liberté et une certaine sécurité économique.

Ces hommes, femmes et enfants arrivent au Québec seuls ou avec une partie de leur famille et une des premières barrières qu'ils devront affronter est bien sûr, celle de la langue. Avant d'aller plus loin, il est important de noter qu'il y a une différence entre les personnes immigrantes ayant un statut de résident permanent avec celles arrivant directement aux frontières en revendiquant le statut de réfugié. Pour les premières, le gouvernement a mis en place, depuis 1968, les COFI (Centre d'Orientation et de Formation des Immigrants) qui permettent aux personnes immigrantes de suivre une formation en français, à temps plein, durant 30 semaines. Pour les secondes, l'accessibilité aux cours de langues est plus difficile. A cause de leur statut de revendicateurs, ils n'ont pas droit d'aller dans les COFI à temps plein. Différents cours de formation ont donc été mis en place pour faciliter l'apprentissage de la langue aux revendicateurs. Toutefois, malgré l'augmentation de groupes où les cours de jour et de soir vont être offerts, les ressources sont souvent insuffisantes pour permettre de répondre adéquatement aux multiples besoins d'une clientèle adulte.

Le Comité d'Education aux adultes (CEDA) est un de ces organismes qui offre depuis plusieurs années des cours de français langue seconde aux personnes nouvellement arrivées au Québec. Oeuvrant dans un quartier populaire où la majorité de la population connaît des difficultés économiques importantes (une grande partie de notre population-cible est prestataire de l'assurance-chômage ou du bien-être-social), nous avons été confrontés au fait que de nombreuses communautés culturelles s'installaient dans le quartier (asiatique, antillaise, latino-américaine...) ainsi que dans les quartiers environnants.

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Même si tous ces gens vivent une situation identique de déracinement, d'adaptation à une nouvelle culture et de confrontation des différences sociales et culturelles, il reste que chaque personne apporte avec elle un bagage de vie unique qui diffère de celui des autres.

Les groupes sont constitués, pour les cours de débutants, de 20 personnes (norme fixée par le Ministère des Communautés Culturelles et de l'Immigration qui nous subventionne). L'âge des participants varie de 18 à 65 ans. On retrouve dans nos groupes un plus grand nombre de femmes. Un service de halte-garderie gratuit pour les personnes ayant de jeunes enfants facilite l'accès aux cours de français, plus particulièrement aux femmes étant donné que ce sont très souvent elles qui ont la responsabilité des enfants dans les communautés que nous accueillons. Par ailleurs, le fait de suivre ces cours et d'avoir accès à une halte-garderie leur permet de briser l'isolement dans lequel elles sont souvent confinées.

Un aspect qui aura un impact important sur l'apprentissage est, celui lié à la scolarité. Dans un même groupe, nous avons des adultes très scolarisés (niveau universitaire ou collégial) et des personnes analphabètes dans leur propre langue. Défi de taille lorsqu'on sait qu'un grand nombre de personnes analphabètes auront peur d'exprimer cet état par crainte d'être refusées dans le groupe. Les enseignantes devront

donc trouver des moyens permettant à l'ensemble du groupe d'apprendre le français sans se sentir dévalorisé ou à l'inverse survalorisé.

La pédagogie employée dans les cours devra donc prendre en compte cette réalité tout en respectant le rythme d'apprentissage de chaque personne. Les outils utilisés devront être très visuels. On favorisera l'acquisition de la langue à travers des situations de vie courantes qui rendront les participants plus autonomes et ce, le plus vite possible.

Toutefois, lorsque nous travaillons avec des personnes mois scolarisées, il faut avant même de penser à apprendre la langue, travailler au niveau de la mise en confiance. Ces personnes, qu'elles soient jeunes ou âgées, ont malheureusement la certitude qu'elles ne réussiront pas à apprendre le français: honte de parler, honte devant les autres plus scolarisés, elles auront tendance à se replier et à s'isoler au sein même de la classe ou d'abandonner leur formation. Il faut donc beaucoup de patience, de temps, de valorisation pour redonner à ces personnes la confiance qu'elles ont perdue. Il faut aussi s'assurer que le groupe générera de lui-même de l'entraide, du soutien et de la solidarité. L'enseignante ne peut à elle seule redonner confiance à un individu. C'est aussi dans un contexte plus global que ce dernier apprendra à s'ouvrir et à faire tomber ses propres blocages. Certains participants qui suivaient un cours de 12 heures par semaine n'ont réussi à dire leur premier mot qu'un ou deux mois après le début des cours. C'est dire la lenteur parfois des progrès et l'ampleur des blocages que l'on peut retrouver chez une personne.

Les contraintes extérieures accentuent considérablement les difficultés d'apprentissage de l'ensemble des participants: statut précaire par rapport à leur demande d'immigration, difficultés d'intégration et d'adaptation, coupure avec le pays de provenance et bien souvent séparation avec la famille, adaptation au climat, différences culturelles importantes... etc. Ces situations créent beaucoup d'insécurité, de peur et de malaise. Enfin, des difficultés seront

rencontrées de part la nécessité pour la personne immigrante de travailler et d'étudier en même temps. Lorsqu'on passe huit heures dans une manufacture ou une usine, il devient difficile voire impossible de se concentrer, le soir venu sur un banc de classe, et ce, malgré l'utilisation de diverses méthodes. La fatigue, le stress auront raison de la meilleure volonté, l'échec sera souvent vécu comme personnel alors qu'il faudrait plutôt mettre en cause le contexte d'apprentissage (réalité économique, conditions de logement, adaptation... etc.).

L'apprentissage du français ne doit pas être le seul objectif poursuivi. L'intégration des nouveaux arrivants à la société d'accueil doit être tout autant travaillée. En effet, dans la plupart des cas, les participants se retrouveront dans un quartier où il y a une grande concentration d'immigrants de leur propre communauté. Cela reste un réflexe normal lorsqu'on arrive dans un nouveau pays de se regrouper avec les individus dont la culture, la langue, les traditions sont les mêmes. D'autre part, il faut dire que bien souvent la population de souche aura quelques réticences à accepter les personnes immigrantes parce que celles-ci semblent trop différentes et que tout ce qui est étranger fait parfois peur. Parce que notre centre est un groupe d'éducation aux adultes, nous pouvons favoriser l'intégration à travers différentes activités où québécois d'origine et allophones pourront se rencontrer, se parler et mieux se connaître.

Le centre offre des cours d'alphabétisation pour francophones, des ateliers d'alimentation-santé, d'exercices en douceur, d'artisanat, de céramique, de menuiserie... etc. Le nombre de participants francophones est donc assez important. Par l'intermédiaire de sorties, les groupes seront invités à participer à des activités communes telles que des sorties à la cabane à sucre, des visites dans le quar-

tier ou à l'extérieur de Montréal, des danses marquant les événements annuels (Halloween, Noël, fête du printemps...) des repas multi-culturels et enfin, un camp d'hiver qui permet aux personnes de vivre 3 jours (à prix modique) dans un camp de plein air afin de pratiquer des jeux et activités de saison. L'expérience, à ce jour, est assez concluante car les rapports tissés entre les participants francophones et allophones ont permis une meilleure connaissance mutuelle. Pour les personnes francophones nées ici, ces gens venus d'ailleurs ont maintenant une histoire, souvent difficile, ils ne sont plus perçus comme des "voleurs de job" mais plutôt comme des individus à la recherche d'une terre d'asile et de paix. C'est à partir de ces activités que l'on remarquera que les préjugés entretenus des deux côtés vont peu à peu tomber et faire place à des liens plus centrés vers la découverte de l'autre dans sa globalité.

Pour les personnes francophones nées ici, ces gens venus d'ailleurs ont maintenant une histoire, souvent difficile, ils ne sont plus perçus comme des "voleurs de job" mais plutôt comme des individus à la recherche d'une terre d'asile et de paix.

Malgré ces efforts d'intégration et de sensibilisation qui ont lieu dans plusieurs groupes et à plusieurs niveaux de notre société, il est difficile pour une personne immigrante de comprendre clairement la spécificité du Québec. Les immigrants, majoritairement concentrés à Montréal sont régulièrement confrontés à l'existence des deux langues: anglais et français. Très souvent, ils vont trouver des emplois dans des manufactures où la langue parlée sera uniquement l'anglais. Ces gens qui font l'effort d'apprendre le français sont alors confrontés à l'utilisation d'une autre langue que celle qu'ils apprennent. En dehors du milieu du travail, lorsqu'ils posent des questions d'information dans la rue, beaucoup de nos participants qui ne connaissent pas du tout l'anglais se font régulièrement répondre en anglais par des québécois francophones et, parce qu'ils ont un accent, on a tendance à croire que leur langue est l'anglais. Comment ne pas être perdu dans un tel contexte? Il est évident que le seul moyen pour que tous ces gens possèdent réellement la langue française est de la vivre (autant au travail, à l'école que dans le quartier...) mais comment le faire lorsque dans bien des cas, la langue du travail est l'anglais, la langue du quartier est l'anglais et que bien des francophones ne font pas l'effort (par manque de sensibilisation) de leur parler en français.

Beaucoup d'immigrants ont déjà été en contact avec le français d'outre-mer par des méthodes audios. Cela peut entraîner une certaine confusion dans leur esprit, entre le français de France et le français du Québec. Le décalage est grand car les différences dans les accents, expressions et structures de phrases sont énormes. Une différence existe aussi entre le français qu'on apprend à l'école et celui que l'on entend dans la rue... Comment arriver à leur faire comprendre tous ces différents accents, ces régionalismes, ces expressions qui font la richesse d'une langue? Il faut toujours préciser dans les cours que la langue du Québec n'est pas moins bonne que la langue de France, que les différences sont réelles mais qu'il ne faut pas dénigrer la langue française du Québec.

L'apprentissage du français ne doit pas être le seul objectif poursuivi. L'intégration des nouveaux arrivants à la société d'accueil doit être tout autant travaillée.

Changer de pays implique pour tous ces gens, peu importe leur pays d'origine, de faire face à un grand nombre d'obstacles. La route est longue avant de pouvoir parler d'une effective intégration au milieu social et économique du pays d'accueil et ce n'est parfois qu'à travers la deuxième génération qu'elle se fera.

Pourtant la première génération ne devrait pas être sacrifiée. Nous avons tout à gagner en tant que membres d'une même société que la population immigrante s'intègre le mieux possible à la société d'accueil et ceci sans perdre leur propre spécificité (culture, traditions, valeurs...). Cela implique que des politiques claires d'intégration soient mises de l'avant mais surtout qu'elles soient portées par l'ensemble des milieux de notre société (travail, syndicat, école, etc.), que des campagnes de sensibilisation, des programmes de formation adéquats (sans distinction de statut) soient aussi mis en place afin de permettre à tous ces nouveaux québécois de construire avec nous une société plus juste.

Les personnes immigrantes ne demandent pas mieux que de s'intégrer à notre pays, nous nous devons de relever ce défi afin d'espérer qu'un jour les mots tels que *préjugés* et *racisme* disparaissent de notre langage.

Marie-Françoise Fayolle *enseigne le français langue seconde au CEDA.*

Some Thoughts Concerning the Education of Refugee Children

by Marcela Durán

The history of the education of immigrants and refugees in Canada parallels the country's history of immigration and is as diverse and complex. Traditionally, immigrant communities have received a mixed welcome from the resident population. The reception of their children into Canadian schools has echoed those public attitudes.[1]

On many occasions in the past, minority communities had to take matters in their hands to ensure that their children received the kind of education they felt was necessary for their spiritual, cultural and economic survival. In the Province of Ontario, examples include the creation of the Separate Catholic School Board in the last century to respond to the needs of Irish Catholic Immigrants[2] and the establishment of separate schools for Black children. Among the latter, the case of the children of fugitive American Black slaves, who arrived in Ontario during the mid 1800s as refugees via the underground railroad, serves as a timely illustration of refugee education. Fugitive slaves were invited to Canada and arrived through the efforts and support of many Canadians. The social reception for these refugees was, nevertheless, an uneasy one. The conflicts over schooling for their children ended up being resolved by regulations that created separate schools in some areas.[3] Having to educate their children in segregated schools or having to cope with racism in non-segregated schools caused great grief amongst the refugee community. It certainly added to their adjustment difficulties.

> The ability to speak English or French was the criterion for school placement. Many of the European refugees found themselves sitting in grade one classes at 10 or 11 years of age, in spite of the fact that they were in higher grades in their home countries.

The education of Jewish children in Canada is again a difficult and in many instances, as in the case of "The Jewish School Question in Montréal" that lasted for almost a century, a harrowing example of how a community of exiles and refugees has had to struggle and debate with the receiving population and institutions to provide good quality education and freedom of religious observance for their children.[4]

Post World War II

In a more recent example, the migrations that followed the end of World War II were primarily movements of refugees, exiles and displaced people — despite the fact that they may have been classed as immigrants.

The immigrants arrived into a more mature nation which had developed strong school systems in each province. Based on receiving immigrants during the first three decades of the 20th century, there had developed a national mood and agreement that schooling was a "superior Canadianizing agency".

The children from the postwar migrations have told their stories in many forms. Their bittersweet memories of school days in Canada can be interpreted as combining the natural difficulty of adjusting to a new society while encountering prejudice and racism in school yards and classrooms. Their teachers interpreted their mission as one of turning these children into

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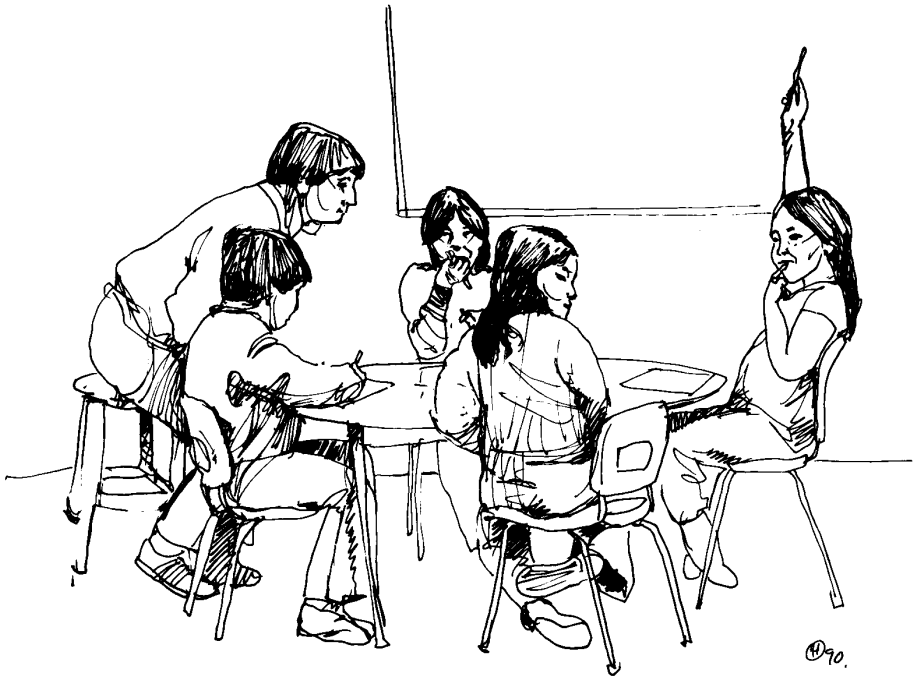
[1] Mary Ashworth, *Blessed with Bilingual Brains: Education of Immigrant Children with English as a Second Language* (Vancouver: Pacific Educational Press, 1988).

[2] Murrray W. Nicholson, "Irish-Catholic Education in Victorian Toronto: An Ethnic Response to Urban Conformity", *Histoire Sociale-Social History*, XVII, No. 34 (November-December 1984), pp. 287-306.

[3] Susan E. Houston and Alison Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 296-302.

[4] *Blessed with Bilingual Brains*, pp. 5-9.



good law-abiding Canadians as soon as possible.

In English-speaking Canada this meant becoming as Anglo as you possibly could and as soon as you could. Schooling was mostly a subtracting and replacement type of experience: Subtract the first language. Subtract the customs and mores. Subtract the experiences. Replace them with the new language, new mores, new customs, new ways of communicating in the home. Well-meaning teachers and administrators would advise parents to stop speaking the language with which they had been raised and replace it with English as "this would give their children a better start."

The ability to speak English or French was the criterion for school placement. Many of the European refugees found themselves sitting in grade one classes at 10 or 11 years of age, in spite of the fact that they were in higher grades in their home countries. Most of the learning depended on the newcomer's capacity to absorb new information, draw conclusions and make connections in the new language. There were few specialized English as a Second Language teachers, and many of the immigrants do not remember having had ESL teachers during their first few years in Canada.

The absence of ESL classes and placing children in grades well below the abilities of the students added to the traumas of war and refuge. Nevertheless, there were many good things that pulled these children through. For one, there was no overt public questioning of their right to be in school and of their right to belong. If there was, it did not result in legislation against them, as had been the case with Black and Jewish children in the past.

The 1960s and 1970s

The 1960s and 1970s saw a definite change, not only in the direction of immigration policy, but also of school policies related to minority groups.

The influence of developmental psychology and child-centered pedagogies contributed in stopping schools from placing older immigrant children in grades for younger children. English or French as Second Language classes for new Canadian children became a standard feature of schools in large urban centres. With them, grew a cadre of specialized teachers who understood the needs of newly arrived children, if not through their training, at least through their everyday exposure to their needs and questions. From a timid beginning in the late 1950s and 1960s, ESL teaching and teachers developed during the 1970s to the point of creating a powerful association of teachers of ESL in Canada.[5] ESL teachers hold national conferences where the needs of immigrant and refugee children are discussed openly and thoughtfully.

One could also credit the development of multicultural policies of the 1970s. Although strongly criticized for promoting endless eating, singing and folk dancing in schools, instead of a realistic intercultural education, multiculturalism in the schools did bring about a sense of acceptance of ethnicity and differences. All of a sudden, it became acceptable in many schools for children to speak their languages, eat their foods and keep their first names in their own language. Festivals in the schools integrating the new communities and translation services in interviews with parents also became a feature in the lives of many students.

Multiculturalism also stimulated and provided some funds to allow minority communities to organize centres and programs to maintain their culture and heritage. Of course, the communities had done so all along, but without official support.

Immigrant communities felt empowered to make presentations to local school authorities about the needs of their children. In some instances their presentations resulted in the inclusion of effective Heritage Language programs and the creation of committees to develop Race Relations policies.

[5] TESL Canada Federation/Federation TESL du Canada.

The new Immigration Act and Refugee Policy of 1976 brought about a newly created national awareness with respect to refugees. Despite the fact that refugee children had been registering in Canadian schools since the 1800s, the national sponsorship and arrival of the Vietnamese refugees brought a dramatic change in public perceptions as well as in school responses. For the first time, schools and communities everywhere became concerned with the educational needs of the Vietnamese children. The lesson learned since then have been a force in the many changes in non-governmental organizations as well as in service delivery that touch the lives of refugees.

Race Relations policies during the 1980s added yet another new dimension to the complex combination of circumstances, policy making and change required to improve the educational opportunities of minority students.

The 1980s and 1990s

At this point, it would seem appropriate to ask ourselves if we should still be worrying about the education of refugees. Should we orient ourselves towards other areas of need, given all the progress we have witnessed in the provision of educational services for newcomers?

While progress has been made during the past decades, there are still many reasons to be concerned about the needs of refugee students.

The concerns relate, on the one hand, to the experiences refugee students bring with them, and, on the other hand, to the uneven delivery of services and related knowledge base existing in schools.

As another article in this issue demonstrates, the traumatic emotional baggage that refugees carry with them into the new society plays a significant role in their possibilities for successful adjustment and integration. Refugee students and their parents may have been subjected to prolonged persecutions in their home countries; to long and arduous journeys to refugee camps; to periods of life in those camps (stretching from a few months to many years); to difficult family relationships due to stress and insecurity, as well as to poor health, due to either life in camps or minimal medical and sanitary care. Refugee children and adolescents will have also experienced disrupted schooling and in some cases may not have been to school at all.

Upon arrival in Canada and during their first two years here, they will also experience a series of changes that can affect their possibilities for success in school: Culture shock and a difficult transition to the new society, many changes of residence and hence of schools, anxiety, tiredness, poor health and also possibly rejection, racism and prejudice in schools and neighborhoods.

Are schools and teachers prepared to understand these realities in their students' backgrounds? In trying to answer similar questions, Mary Ashworth states: "The quality of the recep-

While progress has been made during the past decades, there are still many reasons to be concerned about the needs of refugee students. The concerns relate, on the one hand, to the experiences refugee students bring with them, and, on the other hand, to the uneven delivery of services and related knowledge base existing in schools.

Psychological assessments could yield the wrong results if the assessors have not been educated in principles of immigrant and minority education. Unfortunately, much of the testing continues to be mechanistic. Many decisions continue to be based on IQ tests that are administered in English and do not take into consideration the specific needs of refugees.

tion, assessment and placement of ESL students from preschool to senior secondary school, helps or hinders their academic progress and their success in integrating into school and community life. An insensitive reception, or an inadequate or faulty assessment, or a wrong placement, lays an unnecessary burden on a child struggling to begin a new life in a new land in a new language. While governments and school boards make policies, it is teachers who put them into practice — or, perhaps, circumvent them if they are detrimental to children."[6]

Specialized reception procedures for refugee and immigrant students vary widely between provinces, as well as boards of education, and sometimes from school to school within one board. The assessment of educational background and school-related skills again varies widely depending on the school, city or province. While some boards provide for special assessments in first language to newly-arrived students, others do not. The same variation can be observed with regards to placement procedures. As a result, refugee students in Canada could be registering in schools where teachers and school administrators may be very skilled in understanding and attending to the emotional and academic needs of refugees. On the other hand, teachers and administrators may neither understand nor have the willingness and knowledge base to attend to their reception, assessment and placement needs.

From a critical perspective, the areas that require most attention, and that have been almost universally neglected in Canada in relation to the education of refugees, are assessment and teacher education.

Refugee students upon arrival need an educational assessment that will help the student and the school to find out what kinds of educational programs (ranging from literacy to credit options) the student needs. These assessments must take into consideration the refugee's background and experience as well as first language and school-related skills. If the assessments are not conducted effectively, wrong decisions with regards to placement and school programs can result. A good assessment requires teachers or personnel who can speak the language of the student, who understand Second Language Acquisition theories and who are able to interpret the student's experiences in order to advise the classroom teacher or school administration on a program that will truly provide for the best education for that student.

The other area of concern, with regard to assessment, relates to possible requests by teachers for psychological assessments when refugee students are not performing or progressing at the ratio of other students. Psychological assessments could yield the wrong results if the assessors have not been educated in principles of immigrant and minority education. Unless a school psychologist approaches the testing of a refugee student from a dynamic, holistic perspective, that takes into account the student's past traumatic experiences, second language acquisition and academic history, and contrasts this data with the history of the settlement process looking carefully at what kinds of programs the student has been exposed to in Canada, one could be pessimistic regarding the results or recommendations of such testing procedures. Unfortunately, much of the testing continues to be mechanistic. Many decisions continue to be based on IQ tests that are administered in English and do not take into consideration the specific needs of refugees.

While change is observable in many boards of education, at least at the policy making level and in ESL teaching, very little seems to be happening in universities.

The third area that should be of concern with regard to immigrant and refugee education is the slow change observed in teacher training institutions. While change is observable in many boards of education, at least at the policy making level and in ESL teaching, very little seems to be happening in universities. A cursory look at the curriculum of teacher training programs in Ontario shows that topics such as Second Language Acquisition, Bilingualism, Heritage Languages, Race Relations, Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theories, Minority Education and Anti-Racist Education are seldom included in the required courses for future teachers. There seems to exist little academic interest in these areas. In addition, a recently published study commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Education shows that the majority of student teachers in Ontario universities do not represent the ethnic and racial diversity of the Province so clearly observable in the urban schools of Ontario.[7]

As a conclusion, we can be optimistic about the many changes that have happened in immigrant and refugee education in Canada. These changes ensure that a large number of the students will receive second language instruction from qualified and well trained ESL teachers. However, we cannot be equally optimistic due to the lack of change in other areas, namely reception, assessment and classroom teacher training, which are crucial to the academic survival and success of refugee students.

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[6] *Blessed with Bilingual Brains*, p. 138.

[7] Laverne Smith, *Perspectives on Teacher Supply and Demand in Ontario, 1988-2008* (Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education, 1989).

Literacy for the Health of Refugees - Broadly Speaking

by Ann Goldblatt *

Introduction

An alliance of health workers and refugee advocates to promote literacy has yet to be maximized. The significance of literacy for agency-based refugee advocates and second language educators is not simply that people are able to decipher written English. By full definition, literacy is knowing the "ways of the world," and assuming a strong role within it. Similarly, the attention of health workers to literacy ought to open into a wider concern for how people understand their health, the systems which influence it, and their ability to make choices in those areas which affect their health. The mandates of both health and refugee workers requires and legitimizes activity bases on this broader notion of literacy as education for social justice. With movement in this direction in the health field, refugee advocates can call upon health workers as partners in this process of change.

Alberta players

The pattern of refugees coming into Alberta in the 1980s mirrors that of other parts of Canada, with the major countries of origin being Vietnam and El Salvador. A recent influx has come from Poland. From highest to lowest, the source countries for immigrants and refugees to Alberta in 1988 were Hong Kong, Vietnam, India, the Philippines, China, Poland, the US, Brunei, England and El Salvador, for a total of 14,025, according to Canada Employment and Immigration statistics.

In 1987, the total number of immigrants to Alberta was 12,000, representing 8 per cent of the national total. Almost 20 per cent of Alberta residents are foreign-born and, in the 1986 census on ethnic origin, 51 per cent of Albertans traced their ancestry to Britain, 8 per cent to Germany, 5 per cent to the Ukraine and 5 per cent to France.

Though Edmonton and Calgary receive 85 per cent of newcomers, the relatively small percentage of non-English speaking people in relation to the total population has an influence on the service response. There is a reluctance to sacrifice total population services for the benefit of special constituencies. Nevertheless, the concentration of immigrants and refugees within particular neighbourhoods of Edmonton has led to a reexamination of "mainstream" service delivery in those areas.

The political climate in Alberta is one in which individualism and free enterprise are held high. Those who succeed do so, it is argued, because they have worked hard to get where they are. Minimal government intervention is the preferred mode. Volunteers make a large contribution to service delivery and community organizations are called upon to contribute generously to the well-being of citizens.

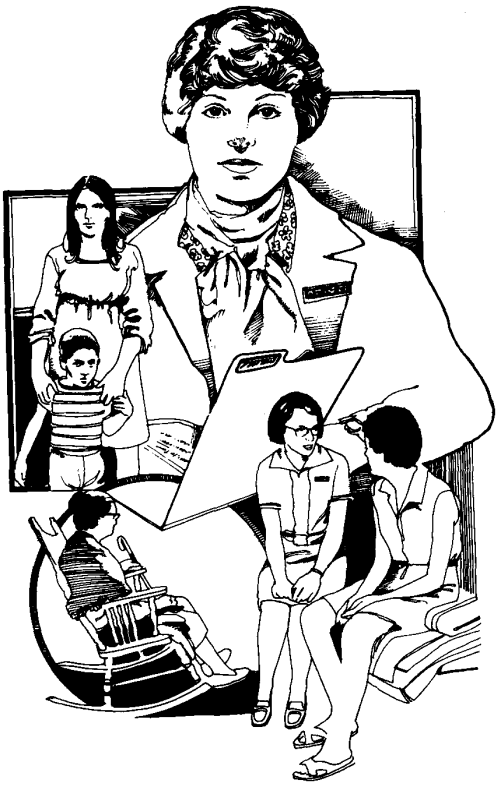
Edmonton is something of an anomaly in this conservative environment, having elected almost a full slate of New Democrats provincially in the last two elections, and a politically progressive mayor in the most recent municipal election in 1989.

Public recognition of culture is primarily of the food and dance phenomenon, along with school-based Heritage Language programs. Edmonton has, for a number of years, hosted a two-day Heritage days festival on the August long weekend, called Heritage days, which attracts gastronomic and arts appreciators by the thousands to partake of the foods, crafts and entertainment of community members of some 30 countries.

Alberta's formal support for refugees is handled through a network of settlement agencies which receive funding from Alberta Immigrant and Settlement Services within the Ministry of Career Development and Employment, and from the federal government. The settlement agencies in the Edmonton area function as community-based volunteer aid organizations whose mandate it is to provide an orientation to life in Alberta. Their services include English as a Second Language instruction, interpretation, counselling and assistance in finding accommodation and employment. Some have launched specific initiatives including a welcome house, Proyecto Salud, addressing violence against women in the Latin American communities, and a volunteer buddy system. The primary agencies are: Catholic Social Services, Changing Together: A Centre for Immigrant Women, Edmonton Immigrant Services Association, Indo-Canadian Women's Association, Mennonite Centre for Newcomers and St. Barnabas Refugee Society.

Human service organizations are becoming increasingly interested in

* I am grateful for the hours spent thinking through the subject of refugees and literacy with Leo Campos, Manuel Rozental and Patricia Salegio, speaking from the "refugee perspective;" with Karen Barnes as an ESL educator; and with Margaret Third Tsuchima, working within a settlement agency. I take full responsibility for what is written but thank them for stimulating my thoughts through their frank reflections.



"targeting" multicultural communities, recognizing that priorities and program design have been oriented to generally healthier, white middle-class people who have benefitted most from the "universal" services. Over the past two years, the Edmonton Board of Health, the local public health agency, has focused on cross-cultural education for staff, researching natural ways of spreading information in cultural communities, and building a case for hiring trained interpreters. The issues have been tackled through the infrastructure of a cross-divisional committee on culture and health. Staffing and programming to reflect cultural needs are now being addressed, in relation to immigrants, refugees and Native people.

The roles we play

The mandates of second language educators, agency-based workers and health workers concerned with refugees, is to promote a high quality of life, with a focus on adjustment needs to life in Canada. How those mandates get interpreted is to emphasize "survival skills" which help people "fit in." Refugees are taught functional English so that they can use the buses, the bank, shop, etc.; they are oriented to the steps involved in securing the basic necessities of life and they are provided with health information with the expectation that they will make healthy choices for themselves and those in their care. Service providers see themselves as having a particular area of expertise, and, working against time pressures, they offer as much support in basic settlement as resources allow. Funding for ESL assumes that people require enough English to get minimal employment and get by in day to day functions.

The broader notion of "liberation literacy," articulated by Paulo Freire, in which the content of the education process is the real life experience of the learners and the purpose is to organize people to challenge social injustices, is believed to be beyond the parameters of institutional workers. Some of the reasons advanced include the sense that initial orientation to life in Canada should be optimistic, and not wallowing in the language of oppression. Further, there is a diversity of life experiences among refugees, depending upon their prior level of education and exposure to Western culture. Their experiences are not necessarily shared, and power imbalances extend to conflict between and within cultural communities. Many refugees who feel appreciative of the opportunity to live in a safe environment are reluctant to rock the boat for fear or reprisal.

Those workers whose salaries are tied to government wallet often do not feel free to be agitators for change. They worry about their own job security, particularly if the orientation is to point our government wrong-doings. Indeed, the curriculum and programs are subject to government approval.

The health field is in transition around the globe as people increasingly recognize the inability of sickness care services to prevent illness and promote health. There is also a growing emphasis on the uneven burden of ill health which falls upon those whose living and working conditions are unhealthy. Still, there have been decades of a heavy accent on expertise. Health professionals are trained with a specialized body of knowledge and see their responsibility as educating people without expert knowledge. Public health workers recognize people come with a set of beliefs, attitudes and behaviour but, in the limited time available, often feel compelled to provide as much information as possible rather than assume the position of a peer learner. Educators thus recognize the reality but feel powerless to address it directly. As a result, education tends to be removed from the social context that is the reality of refugees' lives.

Impact on refugees

The dramatic transitional experience of role changes, altered social status, isolation, child-like language limitations,

job barriers, and discrimination, over and above traumatic experiences in the country of origin, has to be factored into the educational process. If not, much well-intentioned effort is probably lost. Refugees may minimize their contact with formal institutions if they do not believe their services to be relevant or accessible. They learn to accept their "fate," and, after acquiring basic orientation, may not have an opportunity to learn about how systems operate, who has power and how to go about challenging injustices by gaining political power.

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Strategies for change

Rather than dismiss the potential to work in ways which do challenge the status quo where it is needed, it is important to look at who is in the best position to promote literacy that is a "reading of the world as well as of the world." Further, what can those who work within institutions contribute to the process without jeopardizing their jobs or stepping well beyond their mandates. Community groups and associations, if equipped with the necessary resources, may be in the best position to work in this manner. An example exists in the experience of the Latin American communities in Edmonton:

Supported by a short-term project through Planned Parenthood on reproductive health for new Canadians, a Latin American health committee brought together people who would not normally collaborate because of political differences. With a common perception of a breakdown in the health of the "community," the committee acted as a catalyst for dialogue to name what was "ailing" the communities in their "adaptation" to life in Canada and explore solutions collectively. Education on teen sexuality was the starting point, but it could not be considered apart from family relationships, which could not be considered in isolation from the social relations and considerations in the community at large.

The communities initiated a bi-weekly radio program in Spanish on the multilingual station, titled Salud. The program tackled sensitive issues on the cultural crises facing Latin Americans, and quickly built a large listening audience. The radio program spawned further dialogue. A Chilean popular education game designed to explore sexuality in a broad social context was used as a tool in housing cooperatives and other centres within Edmonton and Red Deer. A two-part workshop with parents and teens through a Spanish language and cultural school, Gabriela Mistral, delved into the struggles that characterize the adaptation experience and what was needed to resolve the problems. The cable television station has now requested that the Latin American communities begin a program modelled after the radio program Salud.

With a base of operation and funding channelled through a community agency, the communities were able to make progress on their desire to name and analyze collective problems, and generate acceptable solutions.

Refugees are taught functional English so that they can use the buses, the bank, shop, etc.; they are oriented to the steps involved in securing the basic necessities of life and they are provided with health information with the expectation that they will make healthy choices for themselves and those in their care.

The Latin American health committee members suggested that the best orientation can be given by those who have come through the refugee experience. They can impart realistic expectations and try to prevent some of the pitfalls which prove seriously detrimental to family and community well-being (e.g. overdependence upon services). They are also able to support refugees in building new dreams in place of shattered life aspirations.

Institution-based health and refugee workers can support community groups to use these approaches. They can contribute a technical expertise, they can use the contacts in their sphere of influence with those in decision-making roles and funding bodies, they can contribute material resources (printing, copying, meeting space, etc.). While workers in any setting have distinct functions and skill areas, they can link with people in fields of practice which extend into other areas as partners for change.

It would be inappropriate for health workers expanding their sensitivity to literacy issues to narrowly interpret the need to be strictly adjusting the reading level of educational materials. There are certainly points where adjusted written information is critical. Full literacy implications, however, go far beyond taking what has been developed from and for a middle class social context and plugging it into a markedly different set of circumstances.

As an example, on the matter of prescription drugs, literacy and health documents, few as they are, point to the need to write dosage information and warnings in simple language. True, this is, but what appears on the surface to be a personal issue is also political: the refugee advocate can facilitate an exploration of who gets drugs prescribed, why and how are drugs marketed, pricing practices for generic versus brand name drugs, and the right to raise questions. Health workers are thus linking individual health and social conditions.

Nina Wallerstein, in her book *Language and Culture in Conflict: Problem-posing in the ESL Classroom*, has applied Freire's concept of "liberation literacy" to second language instruction in San Francisco. She suggests that educators learn to listen and observe the cultural experience of the learners in the classroom and in the community, for example, by walking through neighbourhoods with the refugees as guides or by asking refugees to interview others in their community. The goal of the dialogue approach is to encourage critical thinking, following the cycle of naming the problem, understanding why it exists, and planning for action. It is built on the hope for a better life rather than being a matter of negative thinking.

She always begins by asking students "What can you teach me?" to reveal the assumption that everyone is a learner and that the production of knowledge is to be generated by their experience, they are more receptive to her approach. Thus, her orientation to housing, as an example, would address, as collective issues, questions like:

- Why do immigrants/refugees live in these neighbourhoods?
- Who sets rental rates? What are they based upon?
- Why are the services to these neighbourhoods different from other areas (cleanliness, snow-clearing)?
- Why are there ethnic tensions here?

While individual health and refugee educators may already incorporate this approach, it is important that the institutions legitimize the reorientation to increase the value of their interventions.

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Conclusion

Settlement issues are complex. People working within single mandates cannot effectively address the issues. Hence, coordination and partnerships are critical for removing inequities. Those located within institutional settings have an obligation to design their work to reflect the real life and social context of those whose well-being is their concern. Linkages must be strengthened between the multiple players who advocate for refugees toward optimal rather than minimal living standards.

The "liberation literacy" popular education model is grounded in the same set of principles and assumptions as community development. Thus, it calls upon refugee advocates, in all human service settings, to act as facilitators for and contributors to a process of social change where the constituency affected assumes control over decisions. Agreement upon the nature of the refugee experience and appropriate action on the barriers is accompanied by a clear definition of roles and interests.

Given some reorientation in this direction among health workers, the timing is ripe for refugee workers to look to them as allies. The process of building partnerships takes time but the time is well spent because the quality of people's lives is compromised in their absence.

Ann Goldblatt *is a consultant in the Health Promotion Division of the Edmonton Board of Health. Her primary role is bridging the public health mandate with a social agenda through the principles of community development.*

The Commonwealth of Literacy

Literacy, Distance Education and Refugees

Flora MacDonald was the guest speaker at a seminar organized by the Centre for Refugee Studies on October 22, 1990 at McLaughlin College, York University. Canada's former Minister of Employment and Immigration and of External Affairs is now a coordinator with the Commonwealth of Learning, an autonomous institution created by the Commonwealth of Nations in 1987. Her personal interest in refugees and education has been integrated in her current project, which is to coordinate the setup of distance education, literacy and literacy training programs for refugees in southern Africa. The seminar brought together experts in fields ranging from distance education, literacy, literacy training, refugees to international development. The seminar was designed with the intention of giving initial feedback to the Commonwealth of Learning's plan to set up programs for refugees in Southern Africa as well as to set up an informal network of experts to assist in the general direction of the Centre's project.*

Historical Background

Flora MacDonald: The 1970s and 1980s saw a cutback in the number of students coming to Canada for university studies from abroad because increases in the cost of education became too much of a financial burden for them. In light of the fact that some students could no longer be brought to the universities, some educators began to ask whether universities could be brought to the students.

Reports were generated to see if in fact universities could be brought to the students and the question was raised as to whether the effort should be limited to universities only. The result was the creation of the Commonwealth of Learning, which looked at education as a broadly based endeavour. The Centre was approved in principle by the Commonwealth heads of government in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1987.

Thirty million dollars in government grants from various Commonwealth countries were acquired to begin building the Centre. The Centre began operations in January 1989 and is based in Vancouver. It is composed of 12 professional staff, 10 to 12 support staff and is responsible to 50 Commonwealth countries with a total population of over 1.5 billion people. Therefore, resources are extremely limited.

For the purpose of operation, the centre has divided up the globe into four geographic areas: Asia , the Caribbean, Africa and the South Pacific.

The key personnel at the centre are all involved in distance learning. Therefore, a lot of expertise in distance education has been accumulated within a small group of people.

Experts from the centre meet with the ministers of education in their respective countries to ask what the priorities are for their country. They then

* Those in attendance included Flora MacDonald, The Commonwealth of Learning; Howard Adelman, Director, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University; Susan Allen, Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University; Elizabeth Burge, Institutional Resources Unit, OISE; Barbara Burnaby, Department of Adult Education, OISE; Margaret Drent, Department of Political Science, York University; Marcela Durán, Faculty of Education, York University; Andrew Forbes, Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University; Marlinda Freire, Chief Psychiatrist, Student Support Services, Toronto Board of Education; Motoyo Kamiya, International Task Force on Literacy; Karen Kraft-Sloan, Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University; Lawrence Lam, Department of Sociology, York University; Michael Lanphier, Master, McLaughlin College, York University; Diana Lary, Department of History, York University; Rest Lasway, Department of Adult Education, OISE; Micheline Reid, Association of Canadian Community Colleges; Alex Zisman, Graduate Programme in Social and Political Thought, York University.

sit down and figure out how the centre can get involved.

Some examples of possible involvement include the upgrading in the quality of nursing staff in Sri Lanka, the establishment of an Open University in Bangladesh, the upgrading of the skills of primary school teachers in scattered communities in Jamaica, and the establishment of an educational broadcasting system in Namibia.

Primarily, the Commonwealth of Learning is involved in taking education outside of the conventional classroom. In light of this fact, one of the proposals that I have made to the Commonwealth of Learning is to look at the possibility of helping refugees in refugee camps in Southern Africa. This proposal has now been accepted by the Centre.

According to the UNHCR, there is not a great deal being done in the area of literacy and literacy training for these people. There are huge refugee populations in Malawi and Zambia for instance. These people are a "captive audience" mostly made up of women and children.

Marlinda Freire:
It is important to find out what the refugees themselves perceive to be their basic needs and to let them define their own needs on a priority basis.

We are currently looking at a couple of pilot projects. For example, we are in the initial stages of setting up a programfor Mozambican refugees in Zambia. I am trying to elicit from you and others an idea of how we can go about doing this. How do we get to them in an appropriate language? How can we get a hold of materials which have already been produced and have them adapted to the countries we are targeting?

Basic needs priorities

Marlinda Freire: One should first go out and consult with the beneficiaries because sometimes they express a need for types of aid which are unrelated to the one offered. It is important to find out what the refugees themselves perceive to be their basic needs and to let them define their own needs on a priority basis.

Flora MacDonald: We would go into the refugee communities first but we must remember that we are an educational institution and therefore must set things up under the mandate given to us by the Commonwealth Heads of Government. We have to operate within the realm of education. But one can do things involving work with people in the field of agricultural development or health.

Factors affecting community-based participation

Karen Kraft-Sloan: We should first go out and find why other similar programs have experienced low participation rates and see if there are social and cultural factors which bring about success or failure, so that they can be isolated and understood in the context of the project we are now talking about. We should also look at the way in which past programs have been implemented in order to avoid past errors; problems in the past may have been due to the fact that the program was not broad-based nor suited to the needs of the people.

Elizabeth Burge:
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Empowerment

Elizabeth Burge: We need to empower refugees to take control of their own situation and not become passive recipients of international aid.

Howard Adelman: People need to become agents of social change and begin to design their own programs. This is a critical matter and I cannot think of anyone in the field of refugee studies who is capable of designing such a program.

Monitors

Marcela Durán: There are distance education projects in Mexico initiated in the 1970s which used different native languages. Monitors from the community were trained and the native community together with the government designed the projects. It was very successful. Do you plan to use monitors?

Flora MacDonald: No definite plans have been made for the initial stage of the project but the question of monitoring would have to be an integral part of the project. However, unless there are monitors in place on an ongoing basis, simply having radio receivers and au-

dio-visual materials in camps will not work. We need people to be animators s well as tutors.

Technology

Rest Lasway: I am concerned about problems related to technology in a rural setting. In Africa technology is concentrated in urban centres and therefore only benefits urban people. Also many rural people are too poor to own a radio. Maybe we should first consult local experts in the target community because a lot of resources will be needed if the program is to remain rural-based.

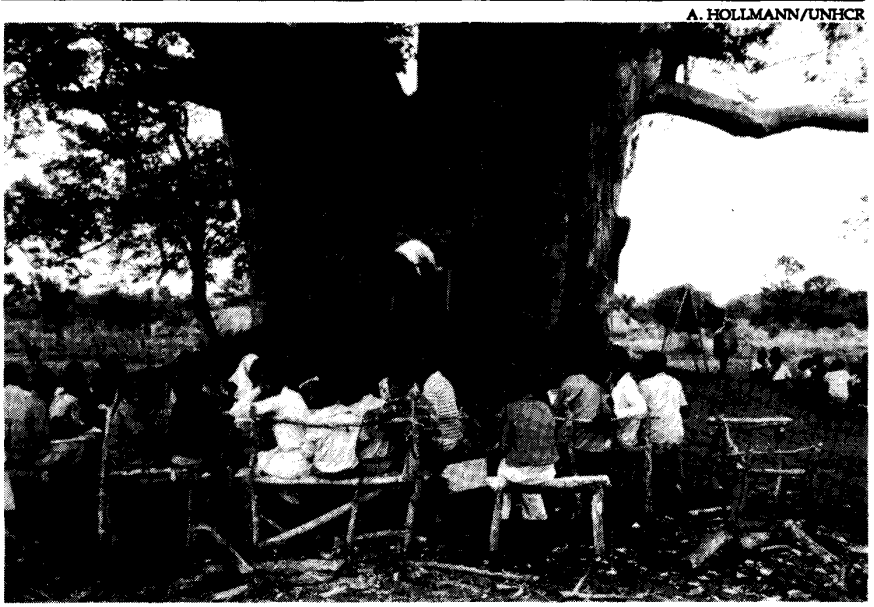
Flora MacDonald: In Tanzania we have been out in the field talking to the Minister of Education who wants to establish an Open University. They asked for two things, a low voltage radio transmitter set up in order to get to all areas of the country, and the introduction of desk-top publishing so that they can do their own preparation of courses that suit their immediate needs.

Contextual Issues

Elizabeth Burge: I find myself thinking more about the contextual issues before one actually gets into putting together an actual program. For example, are the refugees located in one large geographic area? If they are, what are the logistics involved? Are we going to make use of any local community studies/proposals before we get into the use of radio/audio cassettes and other technologies?

I am also concerned about what refugees would like to get out of this program — is it education for integration into the host country?

Flora MacDonald: In response to your question my answer is that we are looking at the situation in terms of the refugees going back to their own countries. There is no question in my mind that people in refugee camps in Southern Africa want to get back to their own country. We have realized that these people are often taken advantage of when they return to their own country unless they have some degree of literacy. We can try to avoid this by preparing them for when they go back. It is the same for any type of agricultural or health assistance that can be provided. These are the three things that are important as far as linking them to a literacy program is concerned.


A. HOLLMANN/UNHCR

Mozambican refugees are eager to acquire some degree of literacy in Chifuga camp, Muanza District, Malawi.

If Mozambique returns to a normal situation it will apply to join the Commonwealth. Namibia has already joined. Refugees who were in Zambia acquired an educational advantage over those who remained in Namibia. However, the Commonwealth of Learning has been asked to continue working with refugees who have returned to Namibia from Zambia because while they possess educational skills which put them ahead of the black population in Namibia, they continue to exhibit real difficulties in reintegrating themselves into Namibian society.

Pre-pilot Phase and Pilot Phase

Howard Adelman: One of the things that we ought to discuss is who does the pilot? Does an outsider manage it or do we offer an opportunity for someone in Zambia with relevant skills to come here and spend four months at OISE and at the Centre for Refugee Studies? Do we ask the camp population to select somebody and we will provide a scholarship for them to come here rather than us figuring out what the program ought to be?

We could assess an orientation program. In this case Oxford could play a better role than we can to acquaint the student with the context of being a refugee which being a refugee does not always teach you. This person could get the larger awareness of some critical self-consciousness if they already had some skills in distance learning and literacy.

In a possible scenario, once the appropriate persons have been found, we would have to send them to Zambia to investigate the parameters of what we are to accomplish and then report back to us, so we can decide if the emphasis should be on distance education rather than on literacy. The persons would also get a briefing on refugees and whatever field they were lacking before they went. They would do particular studies and then go and survey the situation. They would also find people who would be able to work with the project.

Another problem is how to combine

the three fields of knowledge: refugees, distance education and literacy.

Of the three fields, literacy is the most critical. A literacy person should be invited to come to Canada to study distance education and refugees and develop a set of parameters. This person would then go to Southern Africa and find someone to be their local partner. We would therefore have a pre-pilot as well as a pilot phase to the project.

There is also the question of the future location of refugees and how this would have an impact on the project.

There are a number of presumptions involved when talking about the location of refugees. Although camps are most suitable for the purpose of Western international assistance programs, only half of refugees are located in such settings. Therefore, we must envision literacy as education for *all* despite the fact that camps are used as a focus for the project.

A second important issue is the impact upon refugees of the experience of being in a camp. Studies show that the most successful refugees are those who are located in camps. But care must be taken because institutions tend to attract people to a centre which may not be best suited to the needs of these refugees. That is to say, while camps may offer refugees training that they might not have otherwise had, they may also be made more welfare-dependent through such an experience. Those refugees who are self-starters may be better off in the long run than are those who are in camps.

We also can never predict where the refugees will end up. Past experience has shown that repatriated refugees who had been located in camps end up in advance of those who remained in the home country because they have had some time out — a few years sabbatical if you like — and have often had some kind of institutional support which people back home never had. Therefore, refugees ending up back home often find themselves playing a much greater leadership role. One has to think about skills they will need even though they may not now know what roles they will be expected to fulfill.

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Mother tongue literacy versus second language literacy

Marcela Durán: There is a wealth of material on the Brazilian experience as well as literacy projects in Guinea Bissau, which is directly related to what you want to achieve in Zambia. It is also particularly appropriate because the material is in Portuguese.

Marlinda Freire: One problematic issue is a situation in which one is trying to educate a refugee to be literate in his/her second language when s/he is not even literate in the mother tongue. It is difficult to make people literate in English when they may not be literate in their own language.

Flora MacDonald: The Commonwealth of Learning is interested in English language literacy despite the difficulties involved in teaching second languages to individuals illiterate in their mother tongue.

Barbara Burnaby: It depends very much on the motivation of the person. Some people are highly motivated and become literate in English despite the fact that it may be extremely difficult. People succeed if given the appropriate program. Sometimes a bilingual program is needed where learning is in English with a lot of mother tongue support. Sometimes people just want to be able to write letters home so they need to be able to write in their own language.

I know of work being done in Asian refugee camp programs for people who expected to be sent to the US. These people had lived in a totally non-literate environment; they needed to learn things about their own language first so the Americans taught them to become literate in their own language before introducing English.

Marlinda Freire: I would like to know if there is any evidence which shows that becoming literate in a second language before becoming literate in mother tongue is successful. My investigations have led me to the opposite conclusion.

Marcela Durán: Information should be exchanged with the South because of the accumulated experience of the latter in literacy and in international development.

Flora MacDonald: The Commonwealth of Learning is interested in English language literacy despite the difficulties involved in teaching second languages to individuals illiterate in their mother tongue.

Namibia has seven major indigenous languages. The connecting language in the past was Afrikaans. Because the new government knew that it could not communicate very widely on the international scene with indigenous languages and Afrikaans, it declared English to be the official language of Namibia. They now face a major challenge in teaching their teachers English so that they can teach their students. Perhaps the same situation will occur in Mozambique since the primary language of communication in Southern Africa is English.

The difficulty in reaching women

Flora MacDonald: We also have an opportunity to work with women who don't have the same access to education in their home countries as males do.

Elizabeth Burge: Spousal sabotage occurs because men do not want women to be educated.

Available resources

Flora MacDonald: We need information on the feasibility of this project. We need to know the factors to consider. I am trying to put together a database: I understand that the Association of Canadian Community Colleges has one. The United Kingdom has directed their contribution to the Commonwealth of Learning through their Open University, which is doing a database of distance learning materials in all the Commonwealth countries. It is a huge project to put together. India also has a huge amount of data on distance learning.

I have been in touch with the UNHCR to see what they are doing, if anything. They find their hands are with the task of organizing and operating camps. Only in Indonesia and Thailand have they organized adult literacy training. It has been a superficial thing which they introduced to keep people occupied. They did not find any great interest in the project among the refugees, particularly among the men.

My reason to go to the UNHCR was not so much to say "this is what you should be doing" as much as "this is what we are prepared to do in certain parts of the world. Please don't try and block us."

Diana Lary: There might be some people who have been working in Northern communities in Canada or working through the Inuit programs who might have some advice to offer.

Flora MacDonald: The Inuit Broadcasting Service is a very imaginative and successful venture. They are using the Northern satellite of the CBC when it is not in use for transfer of English language programs. They have also been developing a whole Inuit language service. Their service is now seen by Northern groups all over the globe as something to emulate. The Inuit Broadcasting Service is something people in Southern Canada do not know much about.

One of the first requests we receive in going to countries is for information on distance education. Teachers want to learn more about it and how to operate and maintain the facilities. In the Open University in India teachers have not been trained in distance education so they want to set up an institution to train teachers in distance education.

Alex Zisman: Another source of access could be the International Council for Adult Education, based in Toronto, which has links with numerous educational networks all over the world.

Marcela Durán: Information should be exchanged with the South because of the accumulated experience of the latter in literacy and in international development.

Susan Allen: Judith Marshall's expertise on Mozambique could prove useful. Resources at the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, DC, the Society of Friends and CODE could also be tapped.

Alex Zisman: The mother tongue literacy project proposed for Mozambican refugees affects people who are not necessarily part of the Commonwealth and who speak a language other than English. The concept of the project is extremely interesting, but how do you justify it in this context?

A. HOLLMANN/UNHCR

Volunteers from the Mozambican refugee community are chosen to staff the Ukwimi settlement preschool in Petauke District, Zambia.

The Commonwealth of Learning as the appropriate vehicle

Alex Zisman: One of the key factors that has to be considered is functional literacy and why a refugee wants to become literate. Literacy entails not just reading and writing. It is a question of functioning in society, of acquiring a sense of purpose and direction. Where do we want these newly literate refugees to function and how do we want them to function? They have to define this for themselves. This is a key motivational ingredient in the project. For this project to succeed there has to be an enormous grass roots component. We have to make the project rewarding for the refugees and they have to find the project rewarding for themselves.

I also have some concerns about the actual appropriateness of the involvement of the Commonwealth of Learning in a project of this nature. The mother tongue literacy project proposed for Mozambican refugees affects people who are not necessarily part of the Commonwealth and who speak a language other than English. Thus, the complications are built in already. The concept of the project is extremely interesting, but how do you justify it in this context?

Flora MacDonald: In response to the question regarding whether the Commonwealth of Learning has deviated from its intended purpose, I would say that there is no question, as I sit in Commonwealth leaders' meetings, that language is the unifying principle of the organization. You cannot ever leave questions of English language out. Also, these countries share the same legal and judicial systems. Training in the English language should therefore be a component of this Commonwealth-sponsored project. The basic reason for going in is to see how something like this could be carried out in a refugee community because there are probably going to be more, not less, refugee settlements in the future. This may be an opportunity to gain basic knowledge. The UNHCR could be doing it. The Commonwealth of Learning is particularly suited to do this since the UNHCR cannot and because the Commonwealth is networking among 50 countries. In the future, Western African problems may produce refugee influxes in neighbouring countries such as Nigeria for instance. The purpose of the project is therefore to gather information as well as to address the immediate situation.

CAAS Conference

The 1991 conference of the Canadian Association of African Studies will he held at York University, Toronto, from May 16 to May 19, 1991. The general theme of the conference will be "Africa in the 1990s: Development with Democracy."

The 1990s offer the possibility that democratic rule will be spread throughout Africa. Will this trend to democracy continue, and will the new environment be better suited to development than the political climate of the 1980s?

Papers are invited from all disciplines, including the humanities and the arts. Authors are encouraged to address any aspect of Africa's current struggle for development, exploring both the constraints and the opportunities inherent in Africa's art, culture, ecology, economy, and sociopolitical traditions and institutions.

As in the case with all CAAS conferences, there will be many panels that are *not* on the theme of the conference but reflect instead the general membership of the Association. Secondary themes include environmental issues, famine and drought, refugees, AIDS, the African diaspora (especially Canada), history (Islamic Africa, slavery, etc.), cultural/artistic topics, literature, gender issues, racism in Canada, etc. All proposals are welcome.

All proposals must be accompanied by an abstract of 150 to 200 words. A final call for papers will be issued in December 1990. Please send all abstracts, enquiries and suggestions to: Paul Lovejoy, Department of History, 4700 Keele Street, York University, North York, Ontario M3P 1P3, Canada; Telephone: (416) 736-5883, Fax: (416) 736-5834, E Mail: PLOVEJOY@YORKVM2.

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CRS Named Centre of Excellence for Third World Development

The Centre for Refugee Studies (CRS) at York University has been designated a "Centre of Excellence in International Development" by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

York has the largest concentration of scholars undertaking refugee research in Canada, while the CRS is one of the main centres of its kind in the world.

CIDA will provide approximately $5.2 million over 5 years to York University to increase and integrate research projects in the areas of settlement, resettlement, repatriation and the law.

These research projects will be primarily geared to assisting refugees and improving the policies and programs of non-government and government agencies dedicated to serving the needs and responding to the rights of refugees.

The CIDA grant will enable the CRS to expand its research into the whole international refugee field. The funds will also contribute towards the publication of an annual survey and the establishment of a new program in refugee studies at York.

Refugee Law Research Unit Publications

The Refugee Law Research Unit has recently been established under the direction of James C. Hathaway as an operating Unit of Osgoode Hall Law School's Centre for Research on Public Law and Public Policy, and a partner of York University's Centre for Refugee Studies. Its primary goal is to promote understanding of the Convention definition of refugee status, and more generally to promote the humane application and progressive reform of international and Canadian refugee law.

Among the projects of the Unit, one of the most important is the preparation of a series of discussion papers on issues of refugee law. The first discussion paper deals with the recent decision of the Federal Court of Appeal in the case of *Patrick Francis Ward*, a citizen of the United Kingdom and Ireland whose claim to refugee status was ultimately denied by Canada. The decision is extraordinary in its breadth, dealing with notions of agents of persecution and availment of protection, dual nationality, and the definition of membership of a particular social group. Moreover, it has important jurisprudential value, as the majority judgement is complemented by a thorough concurring decision, which read together present most of the major concerns in relation to these three aspects of Convention refugee status.

It is hoped that this discussion paper will be of assistance to advocates involved in the process of refugee determination, to decision makers, and ultimately to those charged with the reform of policy in this field. The Refugee Law Research Unit welcomes the comments of those who read this discussion paper, and look forward to a continuing dialogue with individuals and groups concerned to ensure the continuing viability of the refugee protection system.

Other pending publications include: *Agents of Persecution: When is There a Failure of State Protection?*, *Assuming Refugee Claims Arising from Civil War* and *Refusal to Perform Military Service as the Basis for a Claim to Refugee Status.*